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ABSTRACT

This handbook, the successor to the original published in 1973, is designed to help boards of trustees and administrators strengthen both their internal and external communications programs. Key points to be considered by each school board as it develops its own communication program and specific job requirements are outlined. A four-step communication developmental process is presented that includes commitment, assessment, master plan, and responsibility. The characteristics of newspapers and radio-television are discussed in a section about the news media. Some successful Texas community-school district rapport measures are summarized, as are some techniques that have worked in communicating with special audiences--minority group parents, parents of handicapped children, and parents of disadvantaged children. In the final section are workable ideas and the steps necessary to bring them about. Included are how to pass a bond issue, communicating with community newcomers, and crisis communication. The appendices contain examples from Texas school districts of subjects covered in the text--policy statements, job descriptions, an administrative outline for a community survey, and condensed case studies of successful community involvement techniques. (Author/MLF)

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NEW HANDBOOK FOR SCHOOL COMMUNICATION

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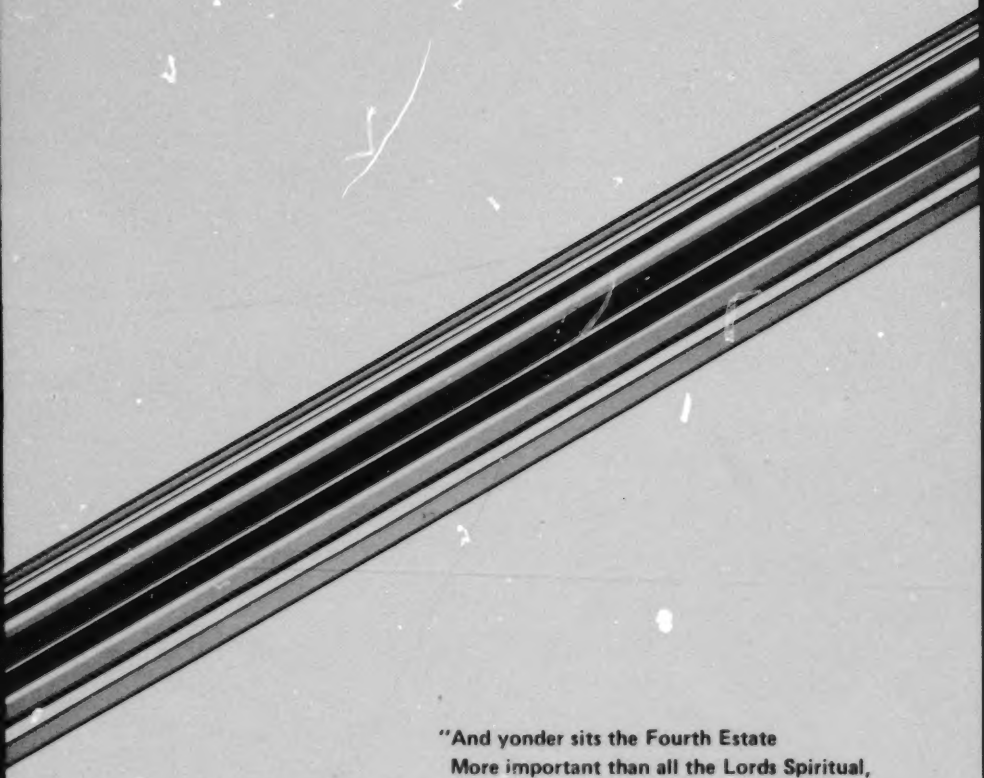
NEW HANDBOOK FOR SCHOOL COMMUNICATION



"And yonder sits the Fourth Estate
More important than all the Lords Spiritual,
The Lords Temporal, or the Commons."

Edmund Burke

FOREWORD

The continuing public demand for accountability is placing an increased emphasis on the school district communication programs. These programs, designed to help each district listen for the citizen viewpoint as well as speak out on school accomplishments and problems, are growing in both effectiveness and number.

Each communication plan will depend on the district's size, locality, and the makeup of its staff and community. However, the public demand for information and the district's need to listen are common to all.

This "New Handbook for School Communication" is the successor to the original handbook published by the Texas Education Agency in 1973. It is designed to help boards of trustees and administrators strengthen both their internal and external communications programs.

We hope this completely revised edition will help school districts meet their increasing obligations in both areas.

M. L. Brockette

M. L. Brockette
Commissioner of Education

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CONTENTS

Communication: The Constant Challenge 1

Policy and Practice 5

The Master Plan 11

The Media and The Message 17

Listening: Communication's Silent Partner 25

The Special Audience 29

Mini-Course in 'How To' 35

APPENDIX 45-74

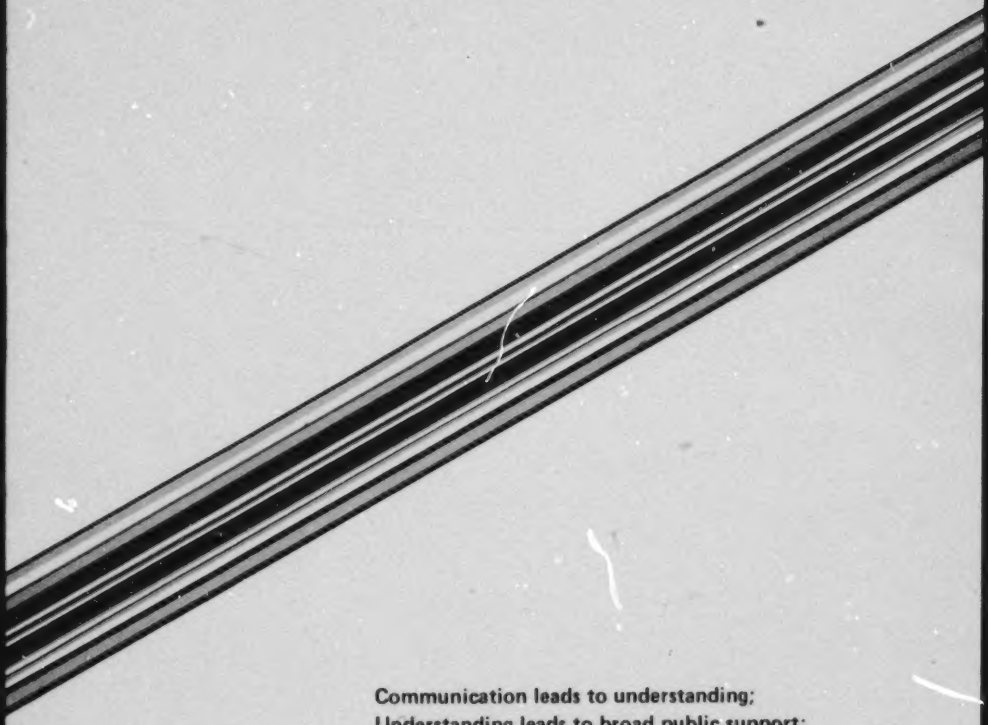
- Appendix A: Policy Statements 47
- Appendix B: Job Descriptions 50
- Appendix C: Administrative Outline for Community Survey 53
- Appendix D: Case Studies 63
- Appendix E: Evaluation Questionnaire 69
- Appendix F: Sources of Assistance 73

Members of the State Board of Education 75

Compliance Statement 76

Notes 77

COMMUNICATION:
THE CONSTANT CHALLENGE



Communication leads to understanding;
Understanding leads to broad public support;
Broad public support leads to progress in education.

Communication is not sending. Communication is sending — and receiving.

COMMUNICATION: THE CONSTANT CHALLENGE

What happened last year?

We talked, not too clearly. We wrote, perhaps not too well. And we listened, too often with half an ear.

Then at the end of the year we wondered how little was understood and how much remained to be made known. After all, we told our story. Didn't we?

Of course we did.

We told it once and no one remembered. We made it clear to ourselves, but to no one else.

And nothing happened.

That was yesterday . . . and it's gone.

Today we live and work in an age of communication. We listen, we watch, we ask, and we tell a little.

That way we get along

And something happens.

We can see it in our schools. They're getting better.

They must be getting better because today more students are enrolled more years and attending class more regularly than at any time in our history.

How can we be so sure now that the "dropout" has invaded our language and our consciousness? Let's look at a few facts.

In 1900, for example, 62 percent of the young people of school age actually attended class every day. We have seen considerable progress since those "good old days."

By 1977, according to the National Education Association, 89 percent of the young people eligible to attend public school were enrolled. Of this number, 92 percent went to class on a regular basis.

Two generations ago, students who graduated from high school had their eyes set on a professional career which required a university education. What happened to the others? Many were the young people – the majority of their generation – who left school for work in business or industry. Today we would call these same young people "dropouts."

Today, the school leaver or "dropout" is a problem we can recognize, identify, and work to solve. There are others.

So far, we have seen no single answer. However, a well-constructed program for listening as well as speaking may provide us with a solid beginning point. For to hear, to understand, and to respond is the essence of communication.

And that is what this handbook is all about.

POLICY AND PRACTICE

What happens when we don't communicate change:

Grandmother:	"Johnny, I'll give you a quarter for every 'A' you bring home.
Johnny:	"What will you give me for 47 check-plusses?"
Mother to Child:	"Who is your teacher?"
Child to Mother:	"Which one?"

POLICY AND PRACTICE

The school district communication program is built on a clear policy statement adopted by the board of trustees.

For one of the board's first tasks is to make sure the citizens and the educators have a mutual understanding of the goals and the programs undertaken by the school district. This understanding is best developed through a continuing process of two-way communication. This process includes both policy and practice.

POLICY

The National School Public Relations Association recommends the following key points be considered by each school board as it develops its own communications policy statement.

(1) The educational organization should commit to writing a clear and concise policy statement with respect to its public information program.

(2) The policy statement should be approved through formal action by the governing body of the organization, should be published in its policy manual, and should be reviewed by the governing body annually.

(3) The policy statement should express the purposes of the organization's public information program and provide for the delegation of such authority to the executives of the organization as necessary to achieve the objectives.

(4) The provisions of the policy statement should be made known to the entire staff or membership of the organization through all appropriate means.

(5) Commitment to the achievement of the purposes of the organization's public information policy should be demonstrated through the allocation of adequate human and financial resources to the public information program. Source: National School Public Relations Association. (See Appendix A, page 47 for examples of policy statements.)

PRACTICE

How to begin? With a board policy in place:

(1) Assign responsibility for developing a public information program. This may mean a full-time staff in a large district. In a smaller district, a part-time assignment of a single person may be sufficient.

(2) Inform the staff that an information program is underway. A citizen/staff advisory group, which may include representatives from the news media, may be helpful.

(3) Work with the information staff member to make sure that both internal and external communications needs will be met.

(4) Set up a budget based on the plan.

(5) Set up an evaluation plan to determine the effectiveness of the program and locate areas of needed change. (See Appendix E, page 69.)

ASSIGN RESPONSIBILITY

Each management task in a school system is the responsibility of one person. Large districts may assign one major task to a single director. Smaller districts, on the other hand, may need to assign two or more tasks to one person.

Any task left to chance may not get done. Some communication problems in school districts may be traceable to a lack of direction and control simply because the primary responsibility has not been assigned to one individual.

Each district, of course, will develop its own staffing pattern based on size, budget, severity of problems, and existing staff. One of the following options, or even a combination, may be useful in helping the district develop its best communications system.

(1) Employ a full-time director of communication or information.

(2) Employ a person to do two jobs – communication and one other such as personnel or federal coordination.

(3) Designate a current staff member, such as a journalism teacher or a department head, to half- or third-time work in communication.

(4) Employ a person from the community on a part-time basis.

(5) Contract with an educational communication consultant on a part-time basis or for a specific task.

(6) Employ a communication specialist in cooperation with one or more neighboring districts on a sharing schedule.

(7) Employ a graduate student part-time as he or she completes internship requirements.

The next step toward a comprehensive district communication program will focus on specific job requirements. These, too, will vary with the size of the school system. The following prime functions are based on experiences of larger and smaller districts. (See Appendix B, page 50.)

LARGER DISTRICTS

News Media: Provide liaison and news releases, assist with inquiries, provide background information and photos, and stimulate media to cover school news.

Information: Prepare and produce written materials such as staff and community newsletters, board reports, annual and specialized reports; prepare audiovisual materials such as films and slide-tape presentations, speak before community groups and operate a speakers' bureau.

Orientation/Inservice: Organize open house and other special school programs, conduct workshops for administrators and teachers on communication topics.

Public Opinion: Maintain a rumor control center, help provide staff services to advisory groups, conduct polls and surveys.

Liaison: Work with community groups and business and industry to broaden communication and seek effective assistance.

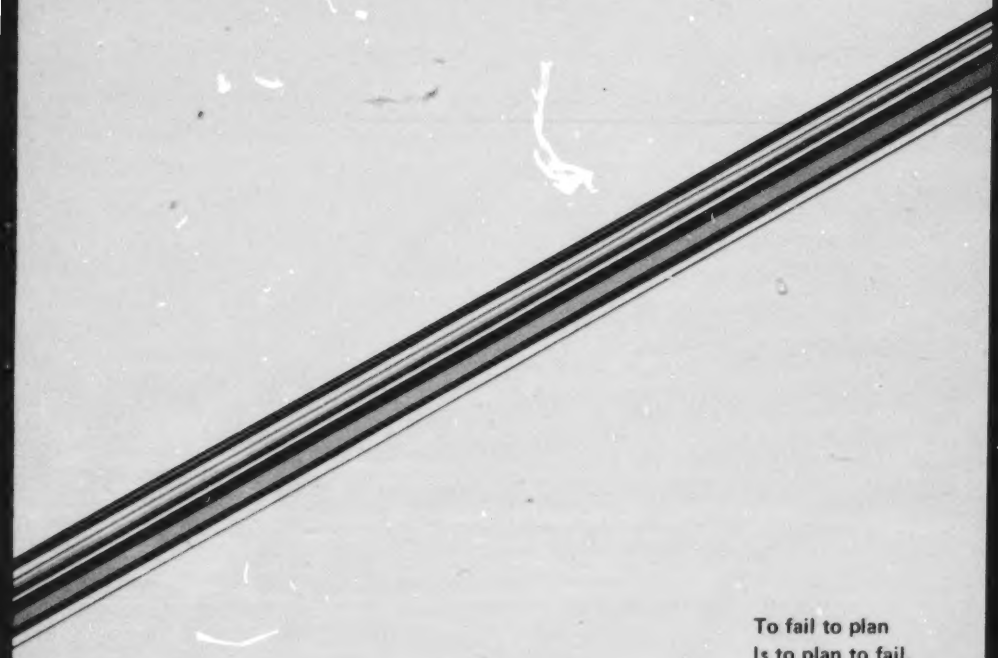
SMALLER DISTRICTS

Information: Prepare an annual report and other specialized publications, prepare monthly board report to staff and interested citizens, operate a speakers' bureau, provide information and ideas to news media.

Liaison: Organize special events such as business-industry-education programs and Public School Week activities.

Public Opinion: Provide staff services to advisory committees, seek their advice and the opinions of community in general concerning school activities and programs.

THE MASTER PLAN



To fail to plan
Is to plan to fail.

Every problem is an opportunity.

THE MASTER PLAN

A good plan is the key to an effective communications program. Based on the needs of the entire district, it should include a detailed course of action complete with alternatives.

While there will be considerable variation from district to district and plan to plan, each one will begin at the same point: A firm statement of policy adopted by the board of trustees.

This section presents a sequence of guide posts which will help school districts develop their own communications plans. Again, plans vary with the planner. We suggest districts begin with as simple a plan as possible. The following four-step developmental process includes: commitment, assessment, master plan, and responsibility.

STEP 1 – COMMITMENT

Today, perhaps more than ever before, every person who pays school taxes is asking the same basic question: What am I getting for my dollar? The policy statement drafted by the school district board of trustees should underline their desire to respond to this and other citizen concerns. It will call upon the staff to make a continuing effort to monitor public opinion and build in any operational changes necessary to incorporate community viewpoints into district programs.

STEP 2 – ASSESSMENT

The district communications plan must be built on its own needs which have been carefully noted and examined by trustees, administration, and advisory groups.

STEP 3 – THE MASTER PLAN

Individual school district plans will range from a simple outline to carefully written detailed documents. They're written in many ways. In smaller schools some may be cooperatively developed

through inservice. The plan should include three common elements:

(1) A system designed to both ease and speed the internal flow of information from central office to campus to teacher – and back.

(2) Community relations.

(3) A close working relationship with the news media in the area.

The example on the following page presents the elements of a comprehensive communications plan. Once the overall plan is set, this kind of detail is particularly helpful for individual projects.

STEP 4 – RESPONSIBILITY

Who is responsible for the district or the campus communication program?

The day-by-day working responsibility for communications will, in many cases, rest with the information officer. This individual – trained in the skills of listening, writing, and speaking – is assigned the major tasks which include informing the public, providing staff development for administrators and teachers, keeping a sensitive ear tuned to public opinion. . . .

While most large and many medium-size school districts include at least one person trained in communications on the administrative team, there are literally hundreds of districts throughout Texas which do not. The superintendent or another administrator assigned "communication" as an additional duty may carry the responsibility for getting the job done.

In either case, communication is not a one-person or even a one-staff task. For a school district's rapport with its public and even its ability to talk with and listen to its own people belongs to each individual. Everyone is a communicator.

Board of Trustees – Each district's philosophy and its effectiveness in carrying out the principle of open communication begins

COMMUNICATIONS PLAN – DOODLE SCHOOL DISTRICT

Campus (if pertinent)

(Month) (Year)

Goal Or Objective:	Activity:	Expanded Description Activity:	Timeframe: From-To: Execution Date	Target Audience:	Person(s) Responsible:	Approx. Cost:	Funding Source:	Evaluation: Method: Date(s):	Remarks:

15

with a clear and strong policy statement by the board of trustees. It is up to the board to develop such a policy and to insist on procedures which will give the school administration a firm basis for implementing an open communications program.

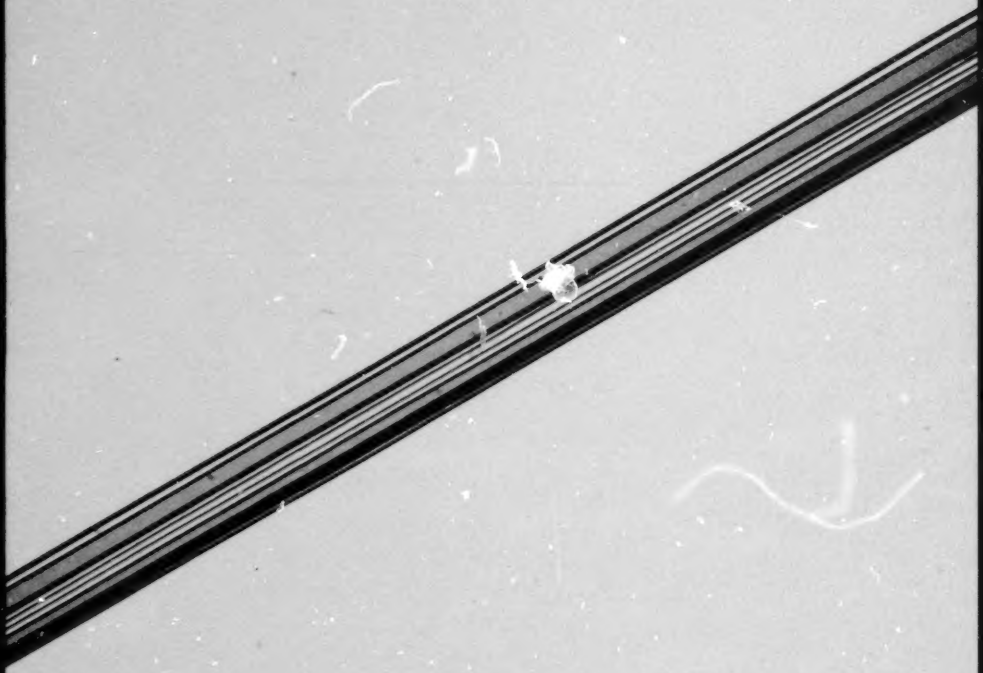
Superintendent – The district superintendent is the first person the patrons, news media, and other citizens turn to for answers. He or she is the most visible (and often most vulnerable) spokesperson. The superintendent should make school/community relations a management function of primary importance. Each staff member must understand the policy and be aware of the in-and-out lines of communication, both as a result of example and a staff development program.

Principal – The building principal occupies a key position. He or she is the on-the-spot administrative agent facing immediate problems with the community, parents, students, and staff. Many such problems can be prevented or eased considerably through the principal's direct action and timely reports.

Teacher – The instructor in the classroom interacts with more disseminators of information (students) than any other staff member. In order to be an effective communicator, the teacher must first be a good teacher. Without learning there can be no effective public information program. At the same time, the teacher is in an ideal position to interpret the school to the community and in return report public opinions to the school administration.

Support Staff – Secretaries, cooks and cafeteria workers, bus drivers, and custodians help shape the public view of the district on a day-by-day basis. These staff members come in contact with students, with parents, and with other school staff members daily. Their understanding of the school's overall operation and their role in its success should be the targets of a continuing inservice effort. If our communities are to understand and support public education, every person employed by a school district or other agency must be aware of his or her communications role. As a result, each district or agency must incorporate this awareness into annual inservice program plans.

THE MEDIA AND THE MESSAGE



Immediacy is the watchword of the news media;
Too late is too bad.

Publications should lure a looker into becoming a reader.

THE MEDIA AND THE MESSAGE

School communication is a constant happening.

Students and teachers talk, principals and barbers talk, counselors and insurance agents talk. Words are passed by parents and by neighbors from the cul-de-sac to the mini-mart.

It may be intentional or it may be thoughtless, it may develop out of a plan or it may carry the shock of surprise. But, it's happening. There is no way to avoid communicating. The challenge to the school district, of course, is to communicate effectively. Sometimes it seems like a massive task.

Yet, once we understand the process, we may find that effective communication doesn't require as much effort as we expected. The secret of success, of course, is to use the channels already built and available to everyone. This section will focus on the news media, the most obvious and available of those channels. We will examine the more formalized methods of communication: print, pictures, and sound.

NEWSPAPERS

Words and pictures inked on newsprint offer the most traditional and one of the most far-reaching vehicles for communicating with large audiences. The daily or weekly newspaper will meet many of our communication needs. However, we must be willing and able to comply with the editor's requirements. News must be timely, unusual, close to home, and hold a broad appeal for a large number of readers. All true. But, there's more.

This often nebulous commodity we call "news" comes in a number of shapes and sizes. And, to borrow the terminology of the media, some news is "hard" and other news is "soft."

"Hard" news is "right now" news. It may include the announcement of a new bond election, plans to construct a new high school, a public hearing on textbooks, a change in the tax rate, or a new five-year contract offered to the superintendent.

"Soft" news is often "space available" news. An in-depth background feature story is one example. What's new about reading? Many parents never really think about the range of abilities their children bring to the classroom and into the work day of a single teacher. What are the different ways children learn to read? How does a district keep training its teachers to cope with these and other problems? A feature story on inservice may result from these questions. It may not make Page One of the final edition, but it will be read with greater interest by more parents when it does run – perhaps well displayed in a feature section.

You believe you have this story and maybe a number of others in your district. Now, the question becomes: How do I tell the editor about them?

To reach any editor, the story must get his or her attention, move to the point, and then stop. In the case of the news-feature on inservice, you might contact the editor with the idea, outline its basic elements, and then let the "desk" assign a staff writer to gather the detailed information, attend an inservice session, and write the story. This is probably the best route to take because most editors prefer their own staff writers to write feature stories.

Your methods of handling "hard" news may vary, both with time and staff available to you.

A trained journalist assigned either full-time or part-time duties as district "communicator," "information officer," or whatever title the job carries, can prepare well-written spot news press releases. These stories should be checked for both accuracy and any policy questions before printing and release.

Most releases, of course, will be rewritten by the media to fit their own style. Usually, this re-writing of "handouts" is a matter of newspaper policy. Frequently, they are cut as well. However, the advantages of a prepared release are well worth the time it takes to write and print. First of all, the facts are straight and are available in checkable form to reporters and editors. Second, the story includes all the facts. Third, the copy may be retained for use later as a basis for further backgrounding.

However, an accident on campus or some other event may make a written release impractical from a time standpoint. In that case, personal and telephone contact will be the most efficient way of

working with editors and reporters. Yet, the basic need remains the same. Get all the facts and help the media get the facts. Reporters want to be accurate; it's a part of being a professional. However, time and inaccurate answers to questions often get in the way of a solid story.

The superintendent is the spokesman for the district. To be sure, he or she may receive invaluable assistance from the staff member with communications responsibility and training.

A trained journalist will, for example, be able to anticipate the reporters' questions and get the answers quickly and assembled in usable form. He or she may also assist the superintendent in answering those questions, particularly when a number of media are trying to get to the central office phone lines at the same time.

This almost frantic search for news story answers may not happen every day or even every month. But, when it does, the close working relationship developed between the superintendent and communications staff, between the district and the media over a long period of time will be an invaluable help. The result will be trust and efficiency.

RADIO-TELEVISION

All news reporters and editors live within the same limitations of scheduling and space. Radio and television, however, translate "space" into "time" and measure it in seconds. They welcome good local stories and are always looking for items which can be illustrated on sound and film.

Every television and/or radio station must give a percentage of its time to public service announcements or features, according to licensing requirements set up by the Federal Communications Commission. The competition for this free time is fierce.

A public service spot may announce "Public Schools Week" or call for parent volunteers to help in the library. New bilingual or career education programs may give the radio or television reporter the germ of a short feature to brighten the evening news. The potential is almost endless.

Both your "news tips" and suggestions for features should follow all news standards for accuracy, brevity, and clarity. In fact, the following basic requirements will help you in dealing with both the print media and the electronic newsroom:

Handle feature stories with care. Don't play favorites. However, if the reporter develops the story concept, he or she has the right to an exclusive.

Treat all requests for information quickly, openly, and honestly. Reporters are almost invariably facing a deadline and must work fast. They appreciate your quick response to questions and requests for help.

Timing is a key factor in placing a non-news story. All media have slow periods, usually on Friday afternoon and Monday. Your background features may be "played" more effectively if timed for these periods.

Be as open as possible in tight situations. Give out as much information as rapidly as you can. Be aware of the dangers of silence. Good news reporters have many sources of information. The district office may not be their only source of "facts" about the schools.

While the above requirements form a prerequisite to effective school/community/news media relations, they do not provide all the shadings which may transform an outline into a working program. Perhaps no single list of "do's" and "don'ts" will accomplish that. However, the following suggestions, gathered by school district communications specialists at work in large and not-so-large districts throughout the state offer a practical course in building friends for local public education.

Educators, well aware that their first responsibility is to the students, their safety, and their right to an orderly education, may lose sight of the fact that media coverage is, itself, a learning experience; that the community is proud of its children, pleased with their success, and delighted with media recognition.

Editors appreciate respect for their "scoop," but understand the school gives its story to all who will listen. Journalists want to cover school news accurately.

Editors make all decisions about what to cover, how it will be covered, if it will run (air), and how. Their reasons for their way of doing things are just as valid in their business as the motivation behind educators in the public schools.

Don't make them "dig for a story." Spoonfeed school news. More important than listing the who, what, when, where, why and how, is recognizing a news story when you meet one. Entertainment-oriented media require news stories with an "angle."

News editors seldom become excited when the band marches. They will, however, take notice if this band has more piccolo players than any other, or if the drummer repaired her drum with bubble gum to get through an intricate drill, or if the majorettes run a school for five-year-old aspirants on Saturdays. All news events have "angles." Learn to recognize the angles and present them with enthusiasm to editors. Do not apologize when a story seems unimportant. Editors know that news about people (good or bad) is important. The more people it interests, the more valuable it is as news. Photographs of children are most valuable of all.

Reporters have a job to do. Refer them to proper sources. Compliment them when they have done a good job (with a carbon copy to their boss). Tolerate minor misrepresentation of the facts and save criticism for a major breach of trust or damaging error.

Since journalists must constantly meet deadlines and maintain flexibility for late-breaking news, a school news story may be postponed or cancelled. Schools worry too often that the story was too short or placed on the wrong page. Keep in mind headlines serve only to call attention to a publication or news story.

Administrators and teachers worry about interviews, forgetting that "ahhs" and "ehhs" accidentally appearing in conversation are natural. Candid comments are always more believable than pre-written statements.

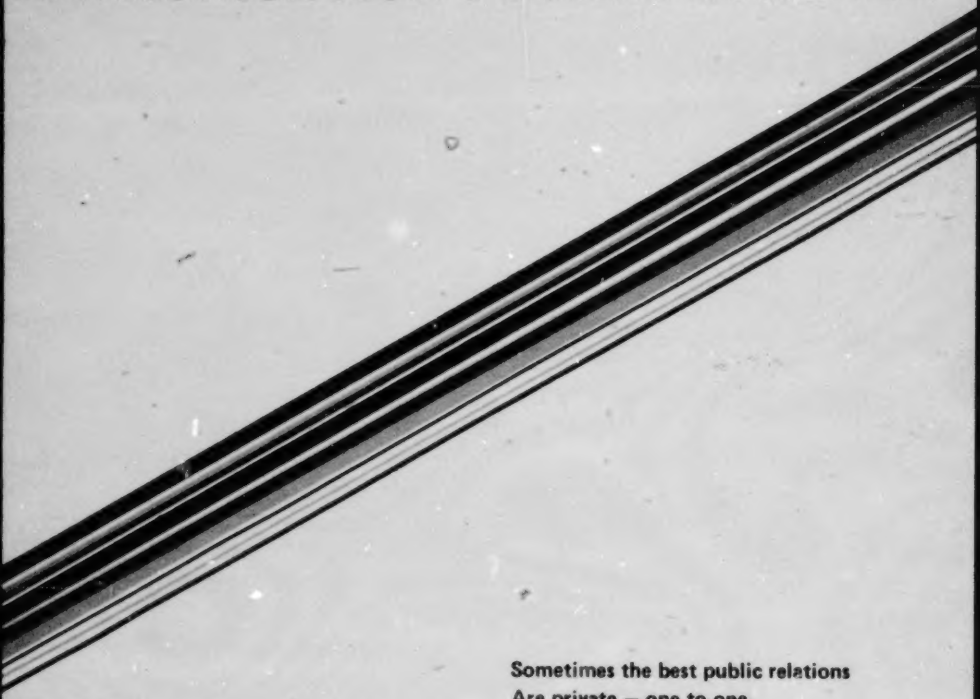
To develop a communications policy for a school district, cite the right of the people to full and complete information regarding the educational system, the right and obligation of the media to provide such information. The inherent rights of privacy, also stated in school district communications policies, are understood by the media.

Some superintendents and school board members worry about columnists, commentators, and editorial writers. Although such journalists have been known to try to create news, they usually respond positively to news sources who are readily available and answer questions freely.

Bad news may be helpful to the school system, although it is initially painful or embarrassing. Bad news generates questions, involvement, and, if dealt with properly, may ultimately bring about support from the community.

To secure positive news coverage, educators may need to modify some attitudes toward the media. Reporters and broadcasters improve their attitudes when they discover that educators are honest, reliable sources, accessible to inquiry, and serving the best interest of the students.

LISTENING: COMMUNICATION'S SILENT PARTNER



Sometimes the best public relations
Are private – one to one.

Without communication, human groups and societies would not exist.

LISTENING: COMMUNICATION'S SILENT PARTNER

Effective communication is a two-sided scale with listening and speaking in almost equal balance. Unless we listen, we really don't know what anyone wants to hear. Schools must make an effort to understand community concerns. (See Appendix C page 53)

The opportunity to listen, to turn an attentive ear to every element within the community, is no accident. It is the result of a planned program which will continue to draw on the entire community for its raw material.

The best communication program is built on a good instructional program. The next step is to inform the staff and the students.

To begin, follow a few routes to community-school district rapport which are successful in Texas and throughout the country.

Community Survey – What are the concerns of parents and other citizens about their schools? To find the answers, ask the questions. A well-planned public opinion survey may be keyed to specific objectives or be general in nature. You may want to gather information through a written questionnaire to parents or by sampling all citizens. Or, you may need a more in-depth plumbing of community views through personal interviews. A number of valid surveys have combined these two methods.

Success, of course, will depend on the advance planning and the actual survey itself. A specialist in this field from the Texas Education Agency, regional education service center, nearby university or a private firm may serve either as a consultant or actually conduct the survey.

Citizen Committees/Advisory Groups – Citizen advisory committees offer invaluable information on a variety of topics from buildings to bond elections, from desegregation to fine arts. Each committee member must understand the committee is advisory only. It does not set policy or administer programs. With specific guidelines set in advance, a committee of citizen advisors can bring information and assistance to the district or single campus.

Volunteers – The opportunities to involve adults as regularly scheduled or "special event" volunteers are as broad as the interests of the community itself. Volunteers may bring a refreshing approach to an art course or story time in the school library. A number of districts regularly call upon business firms for information and help. Junior executives, scientists, computer analysts, artists, mathematicians . . . all bring the world outside the classroom to both teachers and students. Their viewpoints and assistance help keep the curriculum on-line with new developments in a variety of fields.

Pupil Comments – Schools are evaluated during discussions at home. Students make their views known to other students, teachers, assistant principals, custodians, and school nurses.

Complaints – Telephone conversations and personal conferences are reliable sources of opinion and information.

Home Visitations – Primary teachers, visiting teachers, homebound teachers, and nurses have many opportunities to read the pulse of community opinion.

Civic Activity – School personnel involved in civic activities may serve as "sounding boards" for taxpayers and/or parents with definite concerns.

Staff Opinion – Building principals encourage staff members to relate concerns expressed to them off campus. These viewpoints can be communicated while retaining anonymity for the patron.

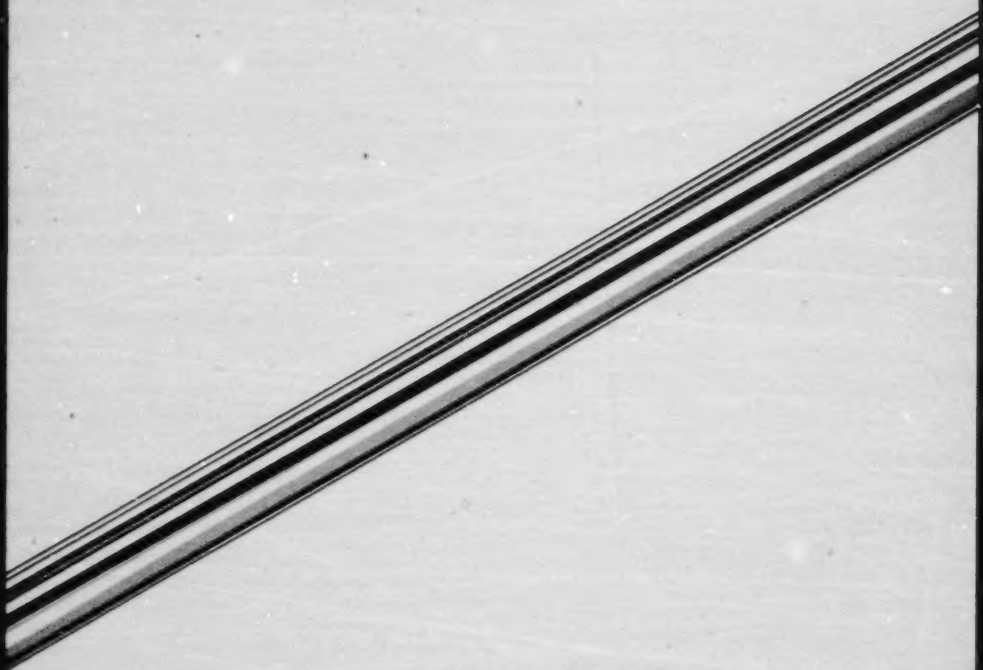
Telephone Log – If a telephone log is kept in the central office, a pattern of concerns may be noted and as a general rule, one call represents 25 similar questions in the minds of people who did not bother to seek out an answer.

Personnel Interviews – Interviews, particularly with teachers and other staff members leaving the district, often provide candid comments which might not be available under other circumstances.

News Media Check – Unsolicited stories and comments carried by local news media indicate attitudes toward the schools.

There are many more, of course. Your district may find numerous other formal and informal sources of information. But, listen it must.

THE SPECIAL AUDIENCE



Any attempt to gain support without participation is counter-cultural in a democratic society.

An ounce of involvement is worth a ton of pamphlets.

THE SPECIAL AUDIENCE

There is, in the true sense of the term, no "general" public. Each evening at 5:30 our fellow commuters stopped by the six-lane red light or the farm-to-market road yield sign seem "general" enough – until we take a closer look. Then they become jigsaw shapes, mini audiences in a massive puzzle.

Some of the differences are as obvious as age, color, and sex. Others are less evident.

We glance at the car in the next lane. The driver is black, female, about 60 years old . . . an easily recognized minority. We can tick off a dozen ways to reach her and other members of similar groups. There is a radio in her car, a community newspaper on her doorstep, a minister in her church, the newsletter her grandchildren bring home from school.

The car ahead signals for a lane change. The driver is white, male, about 40 years old. How do we reach him? No problem. He's a part of the mainstream majority audience.

Look again. The car radio is tuned to the news station, but he's really not listening. His mind is focused on one son, a deaf child entering public school for the first time this week. This man is a member of another minority audience. For once his child is enrolled in your school, his concerns develop into attitudes and those attitudes become a part of your daily need for communication and support.

The pickup edging its way around the corner is driven by another member of another minority in your audience jigsaw picture. Some mornings she tells her children to drink their milk, eat their lunch, and listen to the teacher. Other days she's just bone tired. The school principal asked her to serve on the Title I advisory committee, but she's not sure. All that time and all those people . . . what could she do?

Each driver will enter your communication lane with a special viewpoint. Every one of these people has been stopped by problems, slowed by experience, and pushed by needs as basic as understanding and hunger. Now, you're trying to get their attention for a new message. It won't be easy. But, it can be done.

31

MINORITY GROUP PARENTS

Minority audiences have a long history of little or no involvement. They have watched the schools across a wide credibility gap.

The following techniques may be helpful in structuring effective communication with minority publics.

Get people involved. Invite them to join advisory committees or work as aides in the classroom.

Use minority media. Many communities have newspapers and radio stations which key their programs to specific minority audiences, both through language and news coverage.

Use the grapevine. Word-of-mouth is an excellent means of getting your message into the community.

Be sensitive. Know the issues which are of special interest to minorities.

Put an attitude in your message. Go beyond facts to be effective. Make sure your audience knows: we want you involved. We have a problem and need your help.

Send out a periodic newsletter especially written for the minority audience (in Spanish or the predominant language of the community if it isn't English.)

PARENTS OF HANDICAPPED CHILDREN

Special audiences, such as parents of handicapped children, may have a different set of problems. In dealings with doctors, therapists, other agencies, and insurance companies, they may have been helped or they have been frustrated. In any event, they view the public schools with preset notions.

The federal Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, better known as PL 94-142, requires extensive involvement of parents in educational planning for their children. A number of suggested steps

which will help build a positive relationship with parents are outlined below.

Contact parents frequently and informally concerning progress in educational planning.

Establish a parents bureau of persons who have worked within the system successfully and are willing to assist others.

Write letters that are pleasantly worded, avoid use of educational jargon, and include a space for response.

Organize records so all important documents pertaining to each student are in one place.

Consider special needs of parents: language, work schedules, transportation needs, child care arrangements, and physical limitations.

Help parents understand their responsibilities, including their need to work with the school in planning their child's program.

Inform parents of their rights and the availability of independent organizations.

Emphasize the purpose of educational planning as a route to an appropriate program for the student.

PARENTS OF DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN

How do you reach the parents of disadvantaged children? How do you bring them to the school? Sometimes you take the school to them. Here are a few examples which have worked.

Drive through the neighborhoods where educationally disadvantaged children live. Stop at the grocery stores, the housing project office, the police station and talk to people.

Seek out the community leaders. You can learn who they are by talking to the ministers, police officers, and parents.

Integrate school meetings with community functions. For example, when the housing project residents' council meets, ask for time to discuss the school's role in the community.

Bring teachers to the meetings.

Start parenting sessions in a central location to teach mothers and fathers how to assist their children.

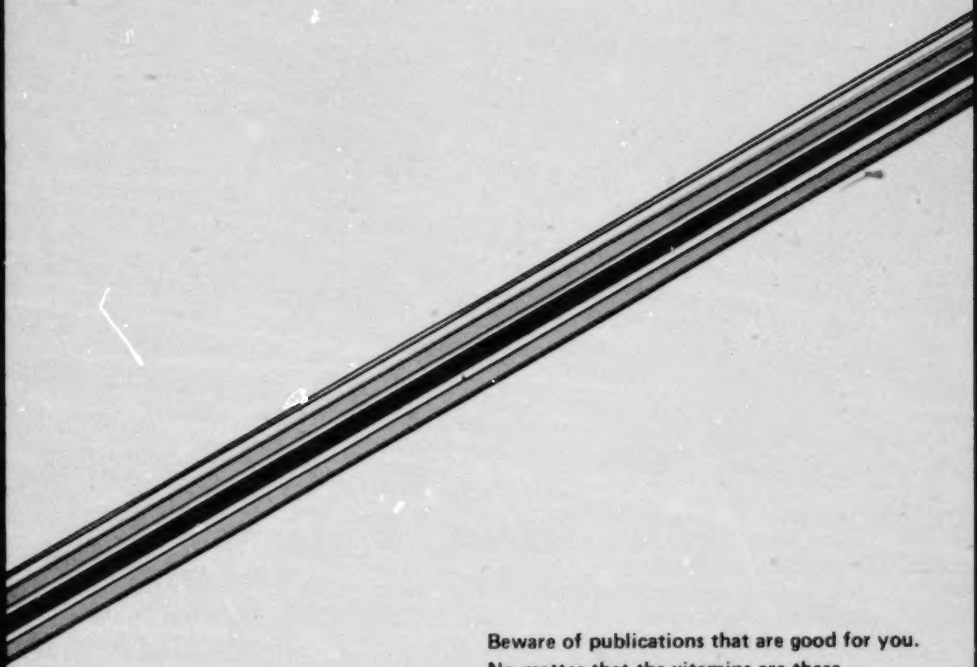
Linking the school to the community is a gradual process which requires consistent attention. The community may expect too much too soon. It takes time.

Remember that traffic lane with the black grandmother, the white father, and the harried mother in the pickup?

The light just turned green.

34

MINI-COURSE IN 'HOW TO'



Beware of publications that are good for you.
No matter that the vitamins are there –
If the flavor is not.

Public relations is the practice of social responsibility.

MINI-COURSE IN 'HOW TO'

Communication problems may develop for two reasons: (1) We didn't do something. (2) Someone else did something over which we had no control.

In the first case, we carry the burden. In the second, the most we can do is be prepared to cope effectively. This section, which might be subtitled "Communicator's Tip Sheet," includes a series of workable ideas – and the steps necessary to bring them to life.

They won't explore all your activities or solve all your problems. These examples will, however, present some methods or programs you may be able to adapt to your own district. (See Appendix D, page 63.)

COMMUNICATE THROUGH BOARD MEETINGS

School board members may well be the key to an effective district communications program. They remember that taxpayers are shareholders in the public schools and work to make the district's plans and programs known throughout the community. One of their most effective tools is the board meeting itself. The following tips will help board members reap communications dividends from their own meetings.

Before the meeting – Send agendas to all news media serving the community; prepare detailed background material for reporters; discuss key issues with school officials and, if possible, with board members; keep the format of the agenda consistent from meeting to meeting.

During the meeting – Distribute the agenda to everyone attending; prepare name cards for everyone sitting at the board table; make sure at least one purely "educational" topic is discussed at each meeting; tape the proceedings for future reference; if there are disagreements, communicate both sides of the issue to the media; be sure procedures for addressing the board are known in advance.

After the meeting – Arrange for press to meet with board members and/or administrators involved in key issues to answer questions and provide background; call news media not represented at the meeting

with a detailed account of the meeting; prepare a one-page board report for school staff and other key persons.

Other considerations – Texas law requires all public meetings be conducted under an "open door" policy. Closed sessions are permitted when personnel or property matters are involved. Encourage representatives of community organizations to attend. Schedule board meetings in different areas of the community and at varying times of day in order to give more city residents an opportunity to attend.

HOW TO PASS A BOND ISSUE

Determine District Needs Before The Bond Election

Know or determine district goals and objectives.

Request input from such audiences as: board of trustees, administrators, staff, PTA and other parent organizations, students, patrons, professional consultants (attorney, tax office, financial advisor, architect).

Planning And Preparation

Select election day carefully taking advantage of lowest bond rates, construction costs, favorable climate and special events and avoiding holidays.

Establish a time-table using election day as a reference point.

Organize broad-based support. Individuals and groups who gave input are active participants and are committed. Use this group to assist in broadening base of support. Include trustees, administration, faculty and staff, student leaders, parent organizations, chamber of commerce, community leaders, realtors, and other concerned citizens.

Prepare media around a central theme. Gather data, information and pictures to use in campaign.

Contact media representatives in advance and send news releases to papers, radio and TV as needed. Slide-tape presentations, district newsletters, special brochures, flyers, and other mailouts are possible. Personal contact is most persuasive. Speakers bureau, telephone committees, and koffee klatches can fill another need. Students speaking in behalf of the plan are almost irresistible. (Under Texas law, school produced literature must present facts. It cannot solicit an affirmative vote.)

Campaign And Communication

Contact media prior to announcement and have news release and answers to anticipated questions ready. Be positive, concise, and forthright. Establish the need, address the remedy, and reveal the impact in dollars and cents.

Special announcement may be made directly to key community leaders through meetings, personal calls or letters.

Meet with the people. Public meetings include representatives of service clubs, chamber of commerce, PTA and other parent groups, student groups, public hearings on the bond issue.

Maintain a hotline for information and rumor control utilizing a one-to-one technique. Make effective use of press releases, district newsletter, mailouts, tent cards and posters, flyers, brochures, staff meetings and staff newsletter, speakers bureau, telephone committee, public service announcements on radio and TV, stuffers in utility statements, notices on bank and business signs.

Election Day

Combat apathy with telephone reminders – Provide free transportation to the polls – Release results to media.

Follow-Through And Evaluation

Canvass vote – Express thanks by individual letters and calls and a resolution from the board of trustees – regardless of outcome. Critique campaign strength and weaknesses for future use.

Don't rest on your laurels if this one passed. Keep the public informed of the progress of improvements, new facilities, etc., included in the bond proposal. Continue to keep lines of communication open with target audiences to ensure passage of future bond issues.

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

Program objectives – Improve staff morale; help the decision-makers stay informed; build good external relations through a well-informed and involved staff at all levels.

Program requirements – Build the program on a written board policy with responsibility centered in one office; make it both honest and timely; involve representatives of all departments and campuses in developing, conducting, and evaluating the program.

Program considerations – Printed or audiovisual material must be varied to meet the needs of different audiences; information should be new and timely.

Communications needs – New programs, new or changed policy, personnel changes, pay and fringe benefits, advancement and training opportunities, local and state events affecting education, national trends, plant operations, board actions, budget and other financial data, calendar information.

Personal contact – Board members visit school campuses, central office administrators teach classes, advisory groups meet with superintendent, student/staff communication sessions, tours and staff exchanges, orientation for new staff members, exit interviews, inservice days, conferences.

Words and pictures – Employee manual, handbooks, board report, pay check stuffers, staff newsletter, calendars, annual report, budget report, idea trading post, recruiting brochure, curriculum guides, special purpose publications.

Evaluation – Review results through committee which helped set up the original program; suggestion boxes, questionnaires, personal contacts, record of countable activities.

SMALLER DISTRICT COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE

The one-person communications office in the non-urban school district has to do it all. In this case, the staff member's versatility and the superintendent's support will be the two major keys to success. The following considerations will be helpful in setting up the office and in making maximum use of the communicator's talents.

(1) Organization is essential. Definite procedures must be set up for writing and clearing news releases, developing a campus-by-campus communications network, publicizing news media deadlines.

(2) The communicator should be a part of the superintendent's administrative team. He or she needs to be informed concerning all decisions. The communicator can be most helpful in pointing out likely public reaction and impact of certain actions and decisions.

(3) The communicator should be well known to all administrators and many teachers throughout the district. He or she should visit each campus, establish rapport, and ask for and offer assistance.

(4) The communicator should also build a solid relationship with the news media and with district and/or outside printers likely to become involved in publications. This relationship will work best when it is based on honesty, fairness, competence, and cooperation.

(5) Even the one-person office needs on-the-spot help. This help will most likely be effective when it comes packaged in the person of a full-time, efficient secretary. Salary and typewriter will be wise investments.

DON'T FORGET COMMUNITY NEWCOMERS

We've all been newcomers. We have searched out a new address on a street map, walked into a strange school building, confronted a total stranger with questions, and hoped for a smile. We know how a newcomer feels . . . and how a single gesture of welcome can make or

break a first impression. This mini-tip sheet will help you pass "Hello!" Here are just a few ways to say, "We're glad to see you!"

School Staff: Let's begin with each district's staff. What can continuing teachers/administrators do to help newcomers, both other staff members and parents and students?

(1) Provide orientation materials for new staff members including: regulations, personnel aids such as insurance, fringe benefits, map of the district.

(2) Central office staff may help each building develop special materials for parents and/or students: map, diagram of building, academic schedule, office hours, extra-curricular activities.

(3) Help principals and other administrators to understand their role in making newcomers – staff, students, and parents – feel at home.

(4) Newcomers are a specific "public." At least one "newcomer" should be on each advisory committee, special task force, tour bus, key communicator list, crisis control panel.

(5) Make available a list of day care centers in the area and list of major employers to newcomers who will be: (a) looking for a job and/or (b) looking for baby sitter. These are frequently available from the chamber of commerce, child welfare office, Association for Early Childhood Education.

Students: Students will appreciate written communications designed especially for them. Friendly and informal! Include: information on activities, special events, scheduling, rules and regulations, school calendar, special or elective courses or academic-related activities. Also, help the "new kid on the block" get acquainted via an assigned "buddy" for the first three days.

Other External Audiences: These individuals, organizations, or specific professional/business/labor groups may include newcomers. They are most valuable, however, in providing a ready vehicle for reaching them.

Here are two ways to approach these audiences:

(1) **Mailing Lists**. Computerize if possible. Chambers of commerce and market research agencies are helpful in this area. Your targets may include: realtors (who need many copies of maps, schedules, booklets, annual reports, all items of interest to new homeowners); doctors and dentists for well-illustrated and easy-to-read publications; child care centers for general information and specifics pertaining to elementary grades; major employers who bring new people into the district; lawyers' offices (again for people who sit and wait); churches; military installations; news media, particularly if they publish newcomer issues or back-to-school editions.

(2) **Speakers Bureau**. Begin with a letter offering to fill program schedule. Suggest a variety of topics which may range from a child's view of the presidential election to the role of the school psychologist. All clubs have a desperate need for programs and new members at every meeting. Follow up with a complete list of available speakers and their topics. Then, once you get on the program, follow up with "thank you for having us" note and solicit additional invitations on other topics. This is the closest thing to one-on-one you can manage in a large or small district.

PUTTING OUT FIRES

The key to being prepared for crisis communication is to take positive steps to gain the confidence of both media and other publics.

Even the best communication channels are strained during crisis. Set the avenues of communication up before you see the likelihood of using them. Know all media representatives (preferably on a first name basis) and make sure you have a good rapport with them.

You can do this by always being available when they call, by your willingness to help, and by being dependable and professional. Also, do not put reporters on the spot by asking that remarks be "off the cuff." Their job is to report what they see and hear.

Instead, impress them with your service. Create an image of being organized and informed.

Prepare your staff for crises by making sure they understand their role in crisis situations. Assign a spokesman for the district whether it be the individual campus leader, the school information specialist, an assistant superintendent, the superintendent or the board president. Avoid switching a caller from one person to another by making sure all employees who might be contacted by the media know who the spokesman is. While the local school where the difficulty arises may be the logical point of media contact, the information officer and the campus leader should work together.

Tell "your" story. If you don't, someone else who doesn't have the facts you do might try to do the job instead.

Do not use language that's difficult to follow; it can cause gaps in understanding. Give facts that will be of uppermost concern to your publics. Work with a list of all available standard communication resources and alternatives. Your list should include such unorthodox vehicles as CB radio, ham radio, cable TV, etc.

In your planning for crises do not forget such groups as PTA leaders, law enforcement and fire department personnel. If it is possible, set up a network of key communicators who can quickly disseminate accurate and supportive information regarding the schools to other members of the community. Just make sure they are a "power" person in his or her circle and that they are generally supportive of the school district, even during times of stress.

Now you can start a chain of reaction throughout the community via your key communicators. Have "dry runs" when there is no crisis.

Make sure you give reliable information during a crisis. This can often be the difference between a well-managed situation that provides for safety and assurance or a chaotic situation that could cause injuries, loss of lives, and time.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A
POLICY STATEMENTS

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION:

In administering the state responsibility for the public schools, the Texas Education Agency shall keep the public informed of both the progress and the problems of public school education in Texas in accordance with statutes and regulations established by the Agency. The Texas Education Agency shall collect, analyze, interpret, and communicate educational information, impartially and independently. The communications program of the Texas Education Agency shall be directed toward strengthening all lines of communication to and from the public, school personnel, and Agency staff. The State Board of Education shall be advised of and consulted on major activities of the Texas Education Agency in its communications program.

HURST-EULESS-BEDFORD INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT:

News Releases

The Board of Education and/or Superintendent shall inform the people of Hurst-Euless-Bedford ISD concerning the objectives, achievements, needs and conditions of the public schools by means of locally circulated newspapers and other periodicals.

Publications

Bulletins, newsletters and other similar publications concerning the public schools shall be prepared from time to time and distributed to parents and the public.

Other Media of Public Relations

The Superintendent of Schools shall inform such other media as motion pictures, radio and television on the occasions he considers necessary in order to inform the public about the schools of the cities.

TEXARKANA INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT:

The Superintendent shall:

"Plan and administer, under the direction of the board of trustees, a comprehensive and effective program of public relations designed to portray adequately the school program operation to the people of the community.

a. Cooperate with various school related groups, community organizations, and agencies in disseminating information and data concerning the school program.

b. Develop a detailed plan of communication with all local news media relative to all phases and areas of the school operation designed to keep the public informed.

c. Plan and direct, in cooperation with the school staff and board of trustees, a systematic approach to disseminating school program plans, information, and data to the public through speeches, articles, communications and other media."

WHITESBORO INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT:

The Board of Trustees of the Whitesboro Independent School District supports the fundamental right of school patrons to know about and to understand the programs and services of their school district. In order to provide such an atmosphere this body pledges an effort to establish and maintain an open two-way communication system that will result in mutual understanding, respect, and confidence between the school and the citizens of this district.

DALLAS INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT:

Publications, Radio, and Television

The public should be fully and promptly informed concerning plans, activities, and needs of the school system. Information will be made available for the press and the public.

(a) Coverage of Board Meetings

Every effort will be made to cooperate with news media to ensure complete and accurate coverage of all Board Meetings.

(b) Appearances, Interviews, and Performances

The Dallas Independent School District encourages news media coverage of all school activities and makes the principal responsible for the approval and appropriate coordination of interviews and other coverage within individual schools. Principals shall cooperate when reasonable requests are made by *bona fide* news media representatives, and newsmen are expected to cooperate with principals in making sure the educational process is not disturbed or disrupted by news coverage. The District's Communications Department will be available to assist both principals and the press in such activities.

(c) School News Releases

The General Superintendent shall have the authority to issue news releases that have city-wide significance regarding the schools.

APPENDIX B
JOB DESCRIPTIONS

NORTH FOREST INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT:

I. Position Title: Public Information Officer

II. Primary Function:

The major portion of the duties of the Public Information Officer is related to providing information services to the staff and community of the school district. In doing so, he must develop, implement, and coordinate a systematic program of communica tions. He shall be directly responsible to the Assistant Superintendent for Instruction/Curriculum and Federal Programs.

III. Major Responsibilities:

A. To plan for dissemination of information about the school system through use of:

1. publications media
2. audiovisual media
3. public speaking media

B. To allocate sufficient resources for the implementation of such plans

C. To coordinate public information services to the public-at-large for the purpose of a better informed citizenry including:

1. district newsletter editorship
2. news media relations
3. professional publications

D. To assist the staff in development of good public relations

E. To assist in evaluating communications efforts

F. To provide administrative services as directed by the Assistant Superintendent for Instruction/Curriculum and Federal Programs

CORPUS CHRISTI INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT:

Coordinator of Public Information and Communications

Under the direction of the Superintendent the coordinator of public information and communications shall be responsible for systemwide functions involving school-community relations and the district's public information and communications program. His specific responsibilities shall be:

To direct the execution of the school district's internal and external communications program

To seek and develop new and different avenues of communications and relationships

To maintain contact and liaison with city news media and state bureaus for national news in an effort to build public awareness of school operational problems and achievements

To assist news media personnel in obtaining background information as well as suggesting school news and feature stories

To write timely news releases for distribution to appropriate media

To assist the Superintendent with his news releases and other related communications materials

To assist in planning and coordinating school bond campaigns

To speak in the community on school related subjects

To visit the schools regularly to observe their operation and to seek ways to assist the schools in conveying and maintaining a positive public image

To maintain continuous development and training of school district employees as members of the public relations staff

To seek an inflow of representative ideas from the school district's general publics on a regular basis

To develop a plan for anticipating, preparing for, and dealing with the public relations aspects of crisis situations

To stay abreast of local, state, regional, and national educational developments and to collect all published new ideas of interest or related to the school district

To assist, in an advisory capacity, in all divisions, departments, and schools when matters of public information or communications are involved

To perform other duties as assigned by the Superintendent

APPENDIX C
ADMINISTRATIVE OUTLINE FOR COMMUNITY SURVEY

How can schools discover what people are thinking? The most efficient method is to conduct a survey. The outline presented on the following pages was compiled by Don Agnew, director of communications, Garland Independent Schoo District, and Dr. Earl McCallon of North Texas State University. The community survey was an integral part of the district's efforts to improve school management.

Surveys can provide powerful, accurate, and objective methods of gathering information. The information collected during the 1977 survey provided the Garland ISD firm data for decisions about bond elections, taxing policies, new programs, and long range and short term goals.

OVERVIEW OF PROCEDURES

Procedures to be followed can be divided into two distinct phases: planning the survey and conducting the survey.

Planning

In planning the survey, specific decisions will be made concerning the following:

1. Appoint survey coordinator
2. Select populations to be surveyed
3. Determine information to be obtained (attitudes, needs assessment information, etc.)
4. Select or develop a method for collecting information
5. Establish survey questionnaire dissemination and retrieval procedures

6. Develop information editing and coding procedures

7. Select analysis procedures

8. Finalize a budget

As a final step in the planning phase, major events should be placed on a timeline which becomes part of a written management plan.

Conducting

Six global steps will need to be taken to conduct the survey. These are listed below.

1. Selection of an adequate and representative sample from the populations.

2. Construction of a questionnaire which is appropriate for the groups to be surveyed and addresses informational needs for decision-making and planning.

3. Development of a delivery system for getting the questionnaire to the samples and an adequate retrieval process.

4. Coding and sorting the returns.

5. Compilation and analysis of the information.

6. Dissemination of findings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on discussions between district personnel and the consultant, the following recommendations are proposed.

Selection of Survey Populations

The survey populations should consist of:

1. The community at large

2. Professional staff (teachers and administrators)

3. School Board

4. Students (grades 10, 11 and 12)

5. Targeted groups (groups of community leaders)

Selection of Survey Method

Questionnaires should be specifically designed for each group. They can contain many of the same questions but should certainly vary in length, reflecting the level of information groups can reasonably be expected to have about public schools. The community questionnaire should be the shortest and the administrator questionnaire the longest. The questionnaires should be structured so analyses by groups are possible and direct comparison between any two groups can be made.

Construction of Questionnaire

Potential questions should be screened by the survey coordinator and selected staff. Items selected (or written) should meet the following criteria:

1. Each question should produce information that can be used for decision-making.

2. Respondents should have sufficient knowledge (or well formulated opinion) to respond to the question.

Based on this input, *first draft* questionnaires can be created.

Preliminary drafts should then be submitted for critique to review committees from groups who will receive the questionnaires. Each of these groups (consisting of about five persons) will critique the questions and make specific recommendations:

1. Are the instructions clear?

2. Are the questions free of "purely educational" terms?

3. Are all questions appropriate?

4. Will the people addressed have knowledge or an opinion about the particular question?

The following review groups should be used:

Teacher/Administrator
Students (grades 10-12)
Community (housewives/businessmen, etc.)

The above groups would meet independently once or twice to critique the proposed instruments.

Delivery/Retrieval System

The following delivery/retrieval system is proposed for each group.

Community (Approximate sample: 2000)

A block cluster sampling procedure, stratified by elementary school attendance areas, is recommended. Depending upon the enrollment of the elementary school, residential blocks will be selected at random. Each household on the block will receive a questionnaire delivered by a PTA volunteer (preferably one who lives on the block). The volunteers (no more than four or five from any elementary attendance area) will be assisted by the school principal. Volunteers will be asked to deliver questionnaires and return later to collect the samples, which are then forwarded to the central office.

Note: It is possible that a principal would like to collect additional questionnaires so a separate analysis by his attendance area can be made. This is feasible and can be handled easily.

Teacher (Approximate sample: 300)

A simple random sample of 300 teachers will be selected to respond to the questionnaire. The selection can be made

from district records. Use campus mail for sending and returning.

Administrators (Complete population)

All administrators will be surveyed by campus mail.

School Board (Complete population)

All school board members will be surveyed using the procedure considered most appropriate by the superintendent.

Students (Sample: 100 tenth, 100 eleventh and 100 twelfth)

Use the least disruptive method of selecting this sample.

Targeted Groups (Approximately 300)

These groups are comprised of individuals who, by virtue of their knowledge, position and/or experience, can provide valuable input to the schools.

Coding/Sorting Returns

This phase will be coordinated by an administrator with clerical help. The consultant will work with the administrator to assure that procedures will be compatible with the computer programs.

Compilation/Analysis of Information

Specially designed computer programs will be needed. Analyses by individual questions should be automatic. Any subgrouping of questionnaire items can be made at the discretion of the survey coordinator. Comparisons among all groups are given. Needs are listed from highest to lowest priority. Comparisons among geographic areas of the city are possible.

CALENDAR OF MAJOR EVENTS

Major Event	Responsibility	Completion Date
1. Review proposed procedures	Assistant Superintendent/ Coordinator	Dec. 17, 1976
2. Identification of populations to be surveyed	Assistant Superintendent/ Consultant	Dec. 17, 1976
3. Compilation of potential questions	Consultant	Jan. 14, 1977
Selection of potential questions	Assistant Superintendent/ Coordinator	Jan. 21, 1977
4. Selection/establishment of review committees	Coordinator	Feb. 1, 1977
5. Develop first draft of questionnaires	Consultant	Feb. 1, 1977
6. Review of questionnaires by review committees	Coordinator/ Consultant	Feb. 9, 1977
7. Finalize questionnaires	Consultant	Feb. 14, 1977
8. Develop dissemination plan	Coordinator/ Consultant	Feb. 14, 1977
9. Select community block, student and teacher samples	Coordinator/ Consultant	Feb. 14, 1977
10. Develop package of materials for principals	Coordinator/ Consultant	Feb. 28, 1977
11. Print questionnaires	Coordinator	March 28, 1977
12. Meet with principals	Assistant Superintendent/ Coordinator/Consultant	April 18, 1977
13. Selection of volunteers	Principals	April 19-22, 1977
14. Distribute questionnaires	Coordinator	April 25, 1977

15. Cut-off date for return of questionnaires	Principals	May 2, 1977
16. Prepare questionnaires for keypunch	Coordinator/Consultant	May 9, 1977
17. Keypunch questionnaires	Coordinator	May 11, 1977
18. Perform computer analysis	Consultant	May 16, 1977
19. Develop reports	Coordinator/Consultant*	May 30, 1977

*Optional involvement

INSTRUCTIONS FOR PRINCIPALS

COMMUNITY SURVEY

1. Arrange a meeting with the PTA president in your area.

2. In cooperation with the PTA president recruit parents to distribute the questionnaires. Try to secure a parent who lives on or near the block to be surveyed. If a parent is enlisted for each block indicated, each person would only have to distribute and collect 10 questionnaires.

3. Meet with the volunteers and explain the procedure to be used. A set of "Instructions for Door-to-Door Survey" is included for each block surveyor. Go over these instructions with them carefully. It is *imperative* that the instructions be followed exactly!

4. Give each volunteer an identification card.

5. The door-to-door survey should be conducted during a given week.

6. Keep close contact between the principal and volunteers.

7. The volunteers should be instructed to turn in the completed questionnaires to the principal. As questionnaires are submitted, check to see that all 10 have been completed. Do this while the volunteer is still with you. It is extremely important we get 10 from each volunteer.

8. Hand-carry all completed questionnaires as well as unused questionnaires to the administrator.

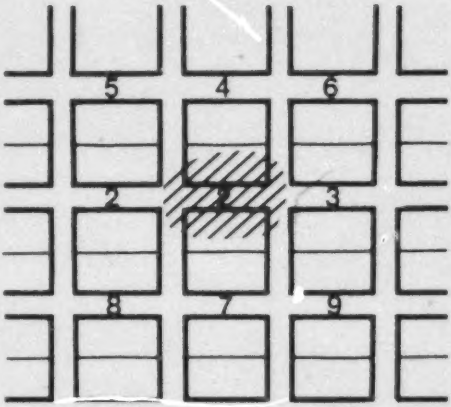
BLOCKS TO BE SURVEYED

School: _____

Block Number	Street	Name of Volunteer

INSTRUCTIONS FOR DOOR-TO-DOOR SURVEY VOLUNTEERS

Sample:



1. Go to the street and particular block that has been given to you to survey.

2. Distribute the questionnaire to 10 houses on both sides of this block. (No. 1 on the diagram on the right.) *Do not* leave the questionnaire if an adult is not at home.

3. If it is not possible to complete 10 questionnaires on the designated block, then go to block 2 through 9 (in order) until you have obtained 10 responses.

4. Ask each respondent to either fill out the questionnaire while you wait or set a *definite* time when you will return to pick it up.

5. If someone refuses to respond to the survey, *do not* insist; go to the next house.

6. Be sure to get 10 responses.

7. *Do not* discuss questions with the respondents. Should it be necessary, you may read the questions to the respondent; however, in no way should you indicate how you would respond.

8. DO NOT DEVIATE from these procedures. It is very important that these procedures be followed if the results are to be valid.

9. After you have secured responses to 10 questionnaires, return the completed questionnaires to the *principal*.

APPENDIX D
CASE STUDIES

Many school administrators have begun communicating with their communities. The reasons range from legislation and community pressure to sensitivity and responsiveness. The bottom line, however, is a better education for boys and girls.

During 1977, the Dallas Independent School District documented many successful cases of community involvement techniques under a Title IV-C grant from the U.S. Office of Education. A sample of these case studies in condensed form is presented on the following pages.

The material has been made available through the courtesy of the Dallas Independent School District.

INTRODUCE A NEW SCHOOL TO THE COMMUNITY – *Activities*: Made informal community presentations in front of supermarkets and in parks; used portable easel and charts to attract attention; took along a Spanish teacher to talk to 25 percent of the community who were Spanish speaking; announced spot for presentation in advance in local media. *Results*: Got large community response; residents "glad to see some faculty out in the community for a change;" planned for more presentations on other topics.

FACULTY TOUR TO LEARN STUDENTS' HOME ENVIRONMENT – *Activities*: Toured community at first faculty meeting of the year; school nurse pointed out special areas such as overcrowded housing with no inside plumbing; landmarks, historical sites, etc., pointed out. *Results*: Teachers gained understanding; students and community saw teachers as interested in them.

INTRODUCE NEW PROGRAM – *Activities*: Involved staff members in deciding which ideas were good; informed parents and students with details of how it would help children learn better; continued to evaluate results and make changes. *Results*: After five years, the school and its program are well accepted; program is not considered controversial; students and parents support the school. *Caution*: Do not begin a new program with fanfare and promises – or renounce tradition; admit mistakes and ask for help; reports from principal must agree with student and staff reports to the community.

ANTICIPATING NEW STUDENTS – *Activities*: School liaison scheduled meetings in all feeder schools with principals, counselors, parent ombudsmen, and parent advisors; feeder school staffs took responsibility for transmitting information. *Results*: Feeder school parents learned about new school; questions could be answered constructively in a controlled setting; communications were set up between staffs of various feeder and receiving schools. *Considerations*: Some "negatives" are based on misinformation and may be righted at a single meeting; attempt to recognize individual differences among communities; include all levels of staff in planning; accommodate schedules of working parents.

STUDENT-PRINCIPAL CHATS – *Activities*: Principal sets aside one hour a week to listen to student questions, concerns, and suggestions (first 10 students to sign up each week get to attend); visit class briefly each week and make it a point to praise some of the children in the class; form student advisory committees for academic and administrative purposes. *Results*: Gives every student a chance to be heard; informed students help keep parents informed; reminds principal that "school is for kids." *Considerations*: Don't allow some other activity to take priority over this one as it is important to the students.

PRINCIPAL/STUDENT "LUNCH BUNCHES" – *Activity*: Principal schedules twice weekly "Lunch Bunches" with students; four or five students eat lunch with principal in a small conference room; conversation is informal, friendly, and personal. *Results*: Lunches make students feel important; parental reaction enthusiastic; principal got to know students on first name basis and improved her own image. *Considerations*: Principal might not have time for twice weekly lunches in a large school; also, may have to adjust approach with high school students.

USE COMMUNITY RESOURCES – *Activities*: Sixth graders visit local businesses one at a time rather than in a group with each child spending a full morning; students wrote a report on each visit and also presented oral reports. *Consideration*: Students gained greater appreciation of local business and vice versa.

IMPROVE STUDENT SELF-IMAGE THROUGH LOCAL NEWSPAPERS – *Activities*: Took photos of any occasion of significance; had photos printed promptly on glossy paper; made sure newspaper had photo before deadline; concentrated on local weekly papers but hoped

to hit a major daily on special occasions; displayed prints on school bulletin board. *Results*: Students are inspired by seeing pictures and names in "the paper" and on bulletin board; community is reminded of school happenings; newspapers delighted with the service; community interest and involvement increased. *Considerations*: Plan pictures ahead when possible; keep accompanying articles short and to the point; use names, names, names.

TOTAL APPROACH TO SCHOOL NEWS COVERAGE – *Activities*: Get news stories from teachers and staff, parents, feeder schools, adoptors, business and other organizations working with the school; telephone news media and/or send out news releases; invite official district photographer to take pictures; send information in typed form to communication department for release. *Results*: Articles in district publications; articles and pictures in local weeklies; cooperation from news media. Considerations: Exhibit clippings where children can see them.

OMBUDSMAN – *Activities*: Advisory committee members are appointed for two-year terms by board of education; complaints are sent to the committee in written form; principal and other staff members investigate school directly and provide answers; answers to complaints were written by principal and signed by committee chairperson; committee did not handle complaints about employees. *Results*: Structured program for answering complaints improved community relations; people with complaints more likely to voice their concerns to other community members. Considerations: Committee members must be trained to handle complaints effectively; specific guidelines set out committee and principal responsibilities.

BETTER ADVISORY COMMITTEE ATTENDANCE – *Activities*: Send each member an agenda one week before the meeting; phone each member the day of the meeting; ask members to bring community concerns to the meeting; ask each member to keep their communities informed on all programs and activities in the school. *Results*: Attendance jumped to 95 percent; community concerns were discussed at the meetings; committee proved helpful in dealing with community problems which impacted on the school. *Considerations*: Select members who are interested in the school; make sure the agenda is well-planned; be sure both receiving and feeder schools are represented; balance by ethnicity, sex, etc., to insure maximum effectiveness.

PARENT TASK FORCE – *Activities*: Round table discussions acquaint parents with school's philosophy and purpose (in this case a magnet business and management center high school); volunteers were sought for each area of need or concern; parent task forces were set up for each subject area; each teacher was asked to keep parents informed of school and student activity. *Results*: Parents became involved in the jobs they were given; students were encouraged by parents' participation; many excellent resources were tapped that would otherwise have been overlooked. *Considerations*: Faculty and staff are always available to talk with parents; parent task forces can reduce faculty work load.

BUSINESS TASK FORCE – *Activities*: A committee of top executives (with decision-making positions) was formed in cooperation with area chambers of commerce and school administration; the committee advised on curriculum, staffing, employment requirements, equipment, and training needs; the committee also helped develop employment opportunities, selecting training stations, and publicizing programs. *Results*: Business executives want their help to be used; program produced community exposure, link between schools and community, coordination between secondary and post-secondary programs in the city.

'DIME A DIP' SCHOOL MEALS – *Activities*: Establish name and goal (each dip of food would cost 10 cents); set up committees to coordinate food donations, set up tables, serve and clean up; advertise event in local paper with response slip at bottom of each notice; organize food donations by category; buy paper plates, utensils, cups. *Results*: Family of four could be fed a balanced meal for $2.50; encouraged participation in school events; also raised money for school projects. *Considerations*: Event would be difficult without an active PTA or large group of volunteer parents; dinner could precede Back-to-School Night or other special event to take full advantage of group turn-out. Serve breakfast or have a coffee club.

HOP-A-BUS – *Activities*: Invite parents to ride a school bus on one special day; promote parental participation as they learn the behavior expected of their children on the buses; mail notice of HOP-A-BUS time and route; reminder note sent home by staff member riding the bus. *Results*: Excellent attendance and relaxed atmosphere; many parental concerns about busing alleviated or eliminated; for some parents, this was their first visit to school.

COMMUNITY MEETINGS – *Activities*: The Board of Education and key administrators held six area community meetings in different sections of the district; news releases and public service announcements encouraged parents to attend; each meeting opened with a slide presentation about the school system; parents and other citizens were given a chance to ask questions; refreshments were served. *Results*: 80 to 90 percent of citizens attending thought area meetings should be continued; parents suggested topics to be covered at future meetings. *Considerations*: Break large group into small discussion groups to make exchange of ideas flow more easily.

ADOPT-A-SCHOOL PROGRAM – *Activities*: Develop a list of potential adoptors; develop a descriptive proposal outlining the school's needs; contact business or other organization and present written proposal in person; follow solicitation with letter thanking him/her for time and encouraging acceptance; if they're interested, don't hesitate to get them involved. *Results*: Most business firms and organizations realize their assistance to a school aids the whole community and their contributions will also benefit the adoptor. *Recommendations*: Make your call in person; know your community.

CAMPAIGNS: 'A MEANINGFUL AND SAFE YEAR OF EDUCATION' – *Activities*: Principal met with staff two weeks before school opening to launch "sell the school" program; billboard donated by an ad agency promised parents "A Meaningful and Safe Year of Education;" every teacher either visited or called parents of each student during first week; calls and visits were continued, along with lots of positive notes to parents; principal concentrated on staff development during the year. *Results*: District was able to hold white residents who had children assigned to minority schools; consumerism worked; staff developed into a cohesive unit.

ORIENTATION FILMSTRIPS – *Activities*: Write script to include brief description of the staff's duties plus school rules; shoot slides of the school interior, students, and key personnel. *Results*: Helped relieve tension; used at feeder schools or during school year for orientation.

RELEASING TEST SCORES – *Activities*: Test scores were released with five groups in mind – teachers, parents, students, community leaders, and concerned tax payers; word was spread by two means – through local media and community meetings; detailed briefings were held for media representatives; each principal held a community

meeting to release scores and discuss major concerns; school officials were always available to answer questions. *Results*: Although scores showed a slight decline, headlines were positive; fears were anticipated in advance and messages designed to help allay those fears; school officials opted to put everything on the table. *Considerations*: Be sure parents understand all the terms you use; lumping all of a school's results into a simple composite figure can lead to dangerous public comparisons with other schools.

PERSONAL NOTES – *Activities*: Teachers commend good behavior and achievements of students to their parents; inquiry and concern will be stimulated in parents who do not receive the "happy grams"; desire is fostered in students to seek approval. *Results*: Students appreciate approval and show more self-discipline; parents have opportunity to commend their children and encourage repetition of good behavior.

'INFORMATION SATURDAYS' – *Activities*: "Information Saturdays" took place on two consecutive Saturdays before school opened; project sponsored by the Committee for a Smooth Transition and the League of Women Voters; information centers were placed in 55 supermarkets and shopping centers, manned by over 400 volunteers (four-hour shifts from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.); data concerning bus routes, immunization, school assignments; safety; and programs were disseminated; plea for volunteers launched; people encouraged to ask questions and cards were available for replies from the Action Center at the main administration building; teachers, counselors, and principals were among the volunteers manning the information centers. *Results*: Enormous amounts of information passed on to the public; public was impressed by fact that teachers and other staff people volunteered their own time to assist; local stores thanked by all and made to feel they had contributed a great deal to the community; many volunteers were recruited. *Recommendations*: Have stand-by volunteers; orientation for all volunteers is a necessity; evaluation of results by volunteers can give insight into planning for the next year.

APPENDIX E
EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE

This instrument, designed to evaluate the extent to which a school district has committed its personnel and resources to communications, consists of excerpts from a more detailed set of criteria developed by the National School Public Relations Association.

It does not provide an indication of how good or how bad any one communications system might be. Neither is it designed to assess the product of the district's program. However, it will help to identify strengths and weaknesses and provide a factual basis for making decisions in the interest of strengthening the unit.

The questions are based on "Educational Public Relations Standards" developed during a four-year study by the Association. Copies of the 48-page publication containing Standards and the complete "Evaluation Instrument for Educational Public Relations Programs" may be purchased from:

National School Public Relations Association
1801 North More Street
Arlington, Virginia 22209

	YES	NO
1. A clear and concise policy statement governing school district communications has been adopted by the Board of Trustees.	( )	( )
2. This statement, which includes the purposes of the program, has been made known to all staff members and is readily available to them.	( )	( )
3. Commitment has been demonstrated through allocation of human and financial resources.	( )	( )
4. Communications is recognized as a management function of primary importance.	( )	( )
5. The director of the communications unit is directly responsible to the superintendent and serves as a member of his administrative staff.	( )	( )
6. Sufficient staff to accomplish the objectives of the district and to cope with problems inherent in a communication program has been assigned.	( )	( )
7. Staff allocations of full-time professionals meet minimum standards set by the National School Public Relations Association. Based upon student enrollments: One or more – up to 24,999 students Two or more – 25,000 to 49,999 students Three or more – 50,000 to 99,999 students Five or more – 100,000 and over	( )	( )
8. The communications unit has adequate office, telephone, budget, printing, audiovisual, and other services.	( )	( )

	YES	NO
9. Program, research, and other basic information is readily available to the communications office.	( )	( )
10. A sound and effective system of internal communications is a vital part of the program.	( )	( )
11. The information unit contacts designated groups or individuals on a regular basis to gather information.	( )	( )
12. The information unit conducts inservice training (formal or informal) intended to assist other staff members in understanding and using the communications system.	( )	( )
13. The information office regularly surveys the staff to establish needs and priorities.	( )	( )
14. The information office publishes a newsletter with contents carefully selected to reflect priorities identified by the entire staff.	( )	( )
15. The information staff has tested all media available to it (including print, electronic, and face-to-face meetings) to determine the most effective ways of communicating with all district employees.	( )	( )
16. The unit solicits feedback from all staff members and utilizes it to modify its operations as necessary.	( )	( )
17. The unit has an established public relations inservice training program.	( )	( )

	YES	NO
18. Specific individuals and community groups with whom continuous communications are desired have been identified.	( )	( )
19. Major policy changes, key administrative appointments, budgetary allocations, and major activities are included in the information and/or news items initiated by the unit.	( )	( )
20. The information office assures follow-through within the district on specific information requests.	( )	( )
21. The information office attempts to capitalize on the particular interests of each of the media.	( )	( )
22. The information office monitors the media for unsolicited comments related to the district (news and feature stories, editorials, etc.)	( )	( )
23. The information office has a long-range public relations planning group or committee which makes recommendations each year to the superintendent.	( )	( )
24. The information office seeks and develops new avenues of both external and internal communication.	( )	( )

APPENDIX F
SOURCES OF ASSISTANCE

Professional communications assistance is available to school districts from a number of sources, including state and regional agencies, professional associations, colleges and universities, and the news media.

The Texas Education Agency division of dissemination and publications includes staff members trained in news media relations, publications writing and design, radio-television-film, and the broad dissemination process.

The Council of Communicators from the 20 regional education service centers includes staff members with a variety of news media and related experience.

The National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA) is dedicated to helping school administrators establish and pursue meaningful programs in public relations. Its services include national, regional, and local workshops plus a variety of specialized publications. Additional information is available from: Dr. John Wherry, executive director, National School Public Relations Association, 801 N. Moore Street, Arlington, VA 22209.

The Texas chapter, National School Public Relations Association, includes more than 100 communications specialists and other school administrators on its rolls. The chapter (TSPRA) will provide workshop, consultative, or publications assistance. Additional information is available from: Dick Smith, executive secretary, Texas chapter, National School Public Relations Association, 3010 Bayshore Drive, Pasadena, TX 77502.

Journalism faculty members are particularly good sources of continuing education in the rapidly changing communications industry.

News media editors and writers will probably be of most help in developing reporting/writing skills and sharpening a "news sense" related to school events.

TEXAS JOURNALISM EDUCATION COUNCIL

Journalism Department
Abilene Christian College
Abilene, TX 79601
(915) 677-1911

Department of Journalism
Angelo State University
San Angelo, TX 76901
(915) 942-2322

Department of Journalism
Baylor University
Waco, TX 76703
(817) 755-3261

Journalism and Graphic Arts Department
East Texas State University
Commerce, TX 75428
(214) 468-2235

Department of Journalism
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(915) 677-7281

Department of Communication
Lamar University
Beaumont, TX 77710
(713) 838-7122

Department of Journalism
North Texas State University
Denton, TX 76203
(817) 788-2205

Department of English and Mass Communications
Pan American University
Edinburg, TX 78539
(512) 381-3421

Department of Journalism
Sam Houston State University
Huntsville, TX 77340
(713) 295-6211

Department of Journalism
Southern Methodist University
Dallas, TX 75275
(214) 692-2629

Department of Journalism
Southwest Texas State University
San Marcos, TX 78666
(512) 245-2169

Department of Journalism
Texas A&I University
Kingsville, TX 78363
(512) 595-2704

Department of Journalism
Texas A&M University
College Station, TX 77843
(713) 845-4611

Department of Journalism
Texas Christian University
Fort Worth, TX 76129
(817) 926-2461

School of Communications
Texas Southern University
Houston, TX 77004
(713) 527-7176

Department of Mass Communications
Texas Tech University
Lubbock, TX 79409
(806) 742-3387

Department of Journalism
Texas Woman's University
Denton, TX 76204
(817) 382-6313

Department of Journalism, Broadcasting, and Film
Trinity University
San Antonio, TX 78284
(512) 736-8116

Department of Communications
University of Houston
Houston, TX 77004
(713) 749-1745

Department of Communication
University of Texas at Arlington
Arlington, TX 76019
(817) 273-2163

School of Communication
University of Texas at Austin
Austin, TX 78712
(512) 471-1845

Department of Mass Communication
University of Texas at El Paso
El Paso, TX 79968
(915) 747-5129

Department of Mass Communications
University of Texas of the Permian Basin
Odessa, TX 79762
(915) 367-2110

Department of Journalism
West Texas State University
Canyon, TX 79016
(806) 656-3329

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COMPLIANCE WITH TITLE VI, CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964; TITLE IX OF THE EDUCATION AMENDMENTS OF 1972; AND THE MODIFIED COURT ORDER, CIVIL ACTION 5281, FEDERAL DISTRICT COURT, EASTERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS, TYLER DIVISION

Reviews of local education agencies pertaining to compliance with Title VI Civil Rights Act of 1964; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; and with specific requirements of the Modified Court Order, Civil Action No. 5281, Federal District Court, Eastern District of Texas, Tyler Division are conducted periodically by staff representatives of the Texas Education Agency. These reviews cover at least the following policies and practices:

(1) acceptance policies on student transfers from other school districts;

(2) operation of school bus routes or runs on a non-segregated basis;

(3) non-discrimination in extracurricular activities and the use of school facilities;

(4) non-discriminatory practices in the hiring, assigning, promoting, paying, demoting, reassigning, or dismissing of faculty and staff members who work with children;

(5) enrollment and assignment of students without discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, or sex;

(6) non-discriminatory practices relating to the use of a student's first language; and

(7) evidence of published procedures for hearing complaints and grievances.

In addition to conducting reviews, the Texas Education Agency staff representatives check complaints of discrimination made by a citizen or citizens residing in a school district where it is alleged discriminatory practices have occurred or are occurring.

Where a violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act and/or Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 is found, the findings are reported to the Office for Civil Rights, Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

If there is a direct violation of the Court Order in Civil Action No. 5281 that cannot be cleared through negotiation, the sanctions required by the Court Order are applied.